

## LEGISLATIVE GENDER NEUTRALITY: IS IT POSSIBLE?

By Sylvia Weber  
Commissioner, RICW

Rhode Island law mandates gender neutrality (hereinafter referred to as GN) and we know from experience that this mandate is very difficult to carry out. GN goes beyond law, it goes to the heart of our attitudes, beliefs, values, the way we were socialized. We can legislate the requirement, the consequences, the structure. We cannot legislate the human actions it requires to carry it out. Very often when parity is required, whether it is gender related or race, religion, sexual orientation, etc., it is met with resentment and anger; resentment and anger at the "have to's," the quotas, the tokens, the perceived loss of control. This resentment and anger comes out in many ways, sometimes overtly and sometimes in the more subtle forms.

Yet, it is time we recognize that for society, business, organization or agency to optimally work, we need to use the talents that we all have to offer and the diversity that can be brought to the table to enrich our lives. We need to confront the biases we were raised with and/or learned through life experiences, that interfere with our working with others. Then, we need to set a plan of action to change them.

We also need to look at the way we do business and ask ourselves some key questions:

- Do I promote a workplace environment that is inclusive and diverse, respectful and dignified, and family friendly?
- Did I include everyone I need to in discussions and meetings on specific subject matters and do they represent a cross section?
- Do I acknowledge and respect everyone's input? Consider tone of voice, body language, condescension, putdowns, setups?
- Do I give credit, where credit is due?
- When and with whom do I have the tendency to tune out?
- Do I see a gender or a person?
- Do I use the same respectful words with the same attitude and tone, with both men and women?
- Do I continue to do business in places that exclude the opposite sex?
- Do I support equality for activities and training in the workplace that encourage growth and development of girls and women as I do for boys and men?
- When it comes to GN, do I walk the talk?

Now that we have legislated GN, we have the work and obligation of raising people's awareness and consciousness as to how they contribute to the problem and what needs to happen to create true change. As Einstein said, "You can't solve problems with the consciousness that created them."

## JUSTICE MURRAY NAMED "WOMAN OF THE YEAR—1996"

**R.I. Commission on Women  
Honors Long Time Jurist**

The Rhode Island Commission on Women has named **Florence Kerins Murray** "The Rhode Island Women of the Year—1996". The long time jurist is Associate Justice of the Rhode Island Supreme Court.

A member of the legal profession for over 50 years, with 40 of those years in the judiciary, Justice Murray's long list of accomplishments attest to her fortitude and persistence during a long career that led to singular successes in surmounting the gender bias that existed in the early years of her career.

Her work, during a struggle half a century long, led her to accumulate a series of "firsts" that is unprecedented, and remains unequaled by women in her field.

- Beginning her legal career at Boston University Law School, Justice Murray was the **lone woman** in her graduating class.
- She was the **first woman** to be admitted to the bar of the State of Rhode Island.

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## CHANGES IN DEFERRED COMPENSATION PLAN AND LIFE INSURANCE

Legislative changes made last year to the Deferred Compensation Law provide guidelines for a plan by the state, cities and towns, to offer mutual funds as part of the investment options. Additionally, the current deferred compensation carriers, Aetna and VALIC, are under review to determine if benefits can be enhanced and fees reduced. The review and selection of mutual funds will be made by the State Investment Commission, through the Office of the General Treasurer. The target date for all changes is October 1, 1996.

### • New Life Insurance Carrier/Rates

Aetna Life Insurance Co. of Hartford, Connecticut is the new life insurance carrier, effective July 1, 1996. All current employees will be grandfathered in" at present benefit levels for both the Basic and Optional life plans.

Basic life rates have been reduced, and if you are enrolled in Optional Life, the rates for employees under age 50, and those over age 70, have been reduced. Rates for other age groups have increased slightly.

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## LEGISLATIVE UP DATE

Since the last legislative up date in the June **pRide**, there has been movement of the following bills.

**96-H-8535A**—Passed House and Senate Finance. Placed on Senate Calendar.

**96-H-7225**—Now a Sub A. Passed House. Referred to Senate Finance.

**96-H-7917**—Passed House. Referred to Senate Finance.

(Information current as of July 15, 1996)

Look for a legislative wrap-up in the October **pRide**.

## MOMENTUM INCREASES FOR PAY EQUITY

Both branches of the Rhode Island legislature have passed resolutions signifying their support for, and recognition of, the importance of working towards a gender neutral classification system for all state workers. The resolutions support the principal of pay equity, and encourage the administration to work towards ensuring equality among job classes. They also support all efforts to attain and implement accurate and unbiased job evaluation systems, and pay-setting processes to foster equity.

The resolutions also call upon the Department of Administration's Division of Human Resources to "monitor the progress of Rhode Island state government with oversight by the Legislative Commission on Pay Equity. . ."

According to information received by the Legislative State Pay Equity Commission at its July 15 meeting, the System Design Group (consultants), expect in the near future to release a final report to the state on pay equity, including a "state-of-the-art" classification system, and proposals for an improved wage-setting process.

On a national level, the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), at its International Convention, resolved to support the Fair Pay Act (FPA) introduced in Congress. AFSCME also extends its support to local efforts to foster pay equity.

## MOVE IT YOUR WAY, MOVE IT ANY WAY, JUST MOVE IT!



We've all heard that exercise is good for us, but do we know what it really does to our bodies? Does it control weight, blood pressure, cholesterol and diabetes, help with stress management, or improve heart and lung function? Can it help prevent osteoporosis, injuries and heart disease? Can you really get a better night's sleep and reduce the feelings of depression and anxiety? Yes, yes, yes.

What you may not have heard is that physical INACTIVITY is almost as unhealthy for you as smoking cigarettes. What's more, over 250,000 Americans die each year from causes related to lack of regular physical activity. The good news is that you don't have to jog 10 miles or lift heavy weights to get the health benefits of physical activity.

On July 11, the Surgeon General released a landmark report on physical activity and health stating that every person should incorporate physical activity into their daily life. Thirty minutes of moderate activity such as brisk walking, dancing, yard work,

or any aerobic exercise, on most or all days of the week provides major health benefits. This report stresses the importance of physical activity for everyone and the need for people to find activities suited to their circumstances.

Summer in Rhode Island is a great time for people to go out and participate in many different kinds of activities. But the hot weather, combined with car exhaust and other pollutants can be dangerous, especially to young children, the elderly, and those not used to regular physical activity.

### SOME TIPS:

- Check your local weather report for any "high air pollution" or "ozone alert" days and avoid exercise.

- Drink water before, during and after your workout to avoid dehydration. Do not drink alcohol prior to, or immediately after exercising.

- Avoid vigorous exercise between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. If you take a walk at lunchtime, keep a light to moderate pace and drink plenty of fluids.

- Do not exercise outside if the temperature is above 80 degrees. Plan your exercise for early in the morning or find an indoor alternative.

- Make sure to warm up and cool down your muscles (slow walking and light stretches) before and after your workout to avoid muscle cramping and injuries.

- Use a sunscreen of at least SPF 15 on your face and body, and wear a hat with a brim, to avoid sun burns and damage to your skin.

- Wear lightweight, loose fitting clothing. Don't wear heavy clothing thinking you'll "sweat out" the fat, you'll only dehydrate your body.

Above all, have fun! Choose activities you enjoy, exercise with a friend or start up a neighborhood fitness group to exercise together and keep each other motivated. The RI Department of Health has joined with other agencies concerned with the health of Rhode Islanders to form the RI Prevention Coalition. The coalition's current focus is on promoting physical activity in the state by encouraging new opportunities for exercise. Whether you join a gym, walk around your neighborhood, swim at the beach or take dance lessons, take a tip from the Prevention Coalition and "Move it your way, move it any way, just move it!"

Call your local parks and recreation department to find out about activities in your town. You can also call the Department of Health at 277-3442 to receive free physical activity information.

## NEW MEMORIAL PARK OFFICIALLY OPENS



The new Memorial Park in which the WWI Monument and several other memorials are located, was officially opened on June 20, 1996, at a ribbon-cutting ceremony attended by several hundred people.

A time capsule containing some 80 items donated by the public, businesses and schools, was interred beneath the monument. Of particular interest were items that included a WWI helmet and gas mask; a CD of original music; a letter from a third grader; several photos, and a Mr. Potato Head from Hasbro.

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# SAVING FOR YOUR RETIREMENT

## What is an annuity?

An annuity is a contract with an insurance company. You, as the annuityholder, make a payment or series of payments. The company, in turn, agrees to provide investment vehicles during the accumulation phase and offers to provide you with a regular income during the payout phase. An annuity also includes a "guarantee," or insurance factor, with a minimum guaranteed survivor benefit. As an employee of the state, you are allowed to invest in an annuity through a special kind of retirement plan known as a Deferred Compensation Plan or DCP.

The amount of your retirement payment is based on how much money you've accumulated, the type of annuity option you've selected, the settlement rate, and other factors.

There are two types of annuities: *fixed and variable*.

## Fixed annuities

Many investors seek a low-risk fixed-rate account to save for retirement. Fixed annuity money primarily goes to work in "fixed" income investments, including U.S. Government Treasury bills, notes and bonds; debt instruments issued by federal government agencies; mortgages; and corporate securities.

A fixed annuity contract is backed by company guarantees and is generally supported by relatively low-risk investments. A fixed contract guarantees a certain credited interest rate and often pays excess interest (the amount over the guaranteed credited interest rate) when market conditions warrant it.

Though a fixed annuity is most suitable for investors who do not feel comfortable taking risks, it can also be used in combination with a variable annuity to balance the risk for an overall strategy that blends greater and lesser risk. If you are willing to trade the possibility of greater return for greater investment stability, a fixed annuity may be your choice.

## Variable annuities

A variable annuity (VA) allows you to invest in options, such as common-stock funds that fluctuate with market conditions. Money deposited in a variable annuity is allocated to a "separate account." Generally, a VA provides investors with the potential to earn a greater return over time. The separate account purchases units in a sub-account or fund, just as you would buy shares of stock in a company.

Each fund option has specific risk and investment guidelines. Basically, with every level of reward there is an associated level of risk. Risk manifests itself in the form of fluctuation in value. The more prone to fluctuation (volatility) an investment is, the riskier.

A fund family usually includes several different investment options offered by a single company. You may transfer your money among the family of funds without tax consequences. Many companies also offer the opportunity to switch between variable and fixed accounts.

Having a selection from among several fund options gives you the ability to blend investments within a fund family. This allows you to diversify your investment.

With a variable annuity, you decide how your money will be invested. You take the same market risk as any investor, but benefit from tax-deferred growth until you withdraw the funds. You also benefit from the expertise of professional fund management.

Total return is one of the most important yardsticks used to measure variable account performance. Total return consists of capital gains and losses, interest, and dividends and includes contract charges. However, performance has to be analyzed in terms of the fund objectives.

Funds may specialize in bonds, money market instruments, government securities, international securities, common stock, or any one of many investment options. Some companies now offer funds guided by standards for socially responsible investing.

## Which is right for you?

Whether a fixed, variable, or combination annuity is right for you depends on your own financial goals, age, income, and risk tolerance.

*For more information about this article, related issues, or a personalized planning review, call a VALIC representative at 1-800-44-VALIC.*

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The VALIC logo features a stylized checkmark inside a square, followed by the word "VALIC" in a bold, sans-serif font, with a registered trademark symbol (®) to its upper right.

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